

CALIFORNIA STATE
Mining Bureau.
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(14.)

Kentucky Geological Survey & Bureau of Immigration.

JOHN R. PROCTER, DIRECTOR.

SWISS COLONY BERNSTADT, LAUREL CO., KY., 2d Dec., 1882.

To the Hon. JOHN R. PROCTER, ESQ.,

Director Geological Bureau,

Frankfort, Kentucky:

DEAR SIR :

According to your wishes, I will try and give you my impressions concerning the Swiss Colony Bernstadt, its climate, water, and ground.

I have been here now since last May, and if I compare this place or country with other places where I have been since my arrival in the United States in the year 1866, I must say that I prefer it to any one place or country where I have lived yet. After a short stay in Wisconsin, in the year 1866, I found that the climate there was too rough to suit me, the winters too long and too hard; so I moved to Toledo, Ohio, and a year afterwards moved out in the country on the Maumee Bay on Lake Erie. But even around Toledo, Ohio, the winters are severe and long, lasting from November until the end of April; which, for a laboring man, is a very great drawback, as it leaves him but six months during summer to work and to earn something. Then comes the winter season, six months, half of which time he can not work at all on account of severe cold and heavy snow, and, during what is left of milder weather for working, he earns about half wages, so that the poorer class of people, the laboring men, have to depend on their earnings over summer to see them through the year. But in these low and level

countries, although the ground generally is rich, it is at the same time wet, and has to be ditched, which not only is connected with considerable labor and expense, but also is the cause of those fevers so prevalent in low-lying countries—malarial, bilious, and ague fevers. For although the winters are generally cold and severe, the summers are none the less warm, so that in harvest time the heat becomes so oppressive that the harvest hands often give out, and overheating and attacks of sunstroke are of frequent occurrence, whereupon, generally a fever follows that lays up the laborer for a month or two, or three even, thereby spoiling his summer earnings, and leaving him, at the end of summer, unprovided for the winter.

Just on account of these circumstances are the poorer class of people, and especially new-comers from the old country, kept down year by year until they almost give up the struggle as useless, tired by all the hardships of climate and living.

I have been through that myself, and have seen a good many others, stronger men than myself, after a residence of six years, broken down in health, dispirited, and poorer than they were when they came to this country.

Now, how is it about that in Bernstadt, Kentucky?

In answer, I will relate again my own experience. It will be understood I could not acquire much property in all that time I lived in East Toledo, Ohio. I was sick too much. I had the fever, too, many times, and could not help having it; so I was kept down to a bare living. I had a small place and a little house on it for my own; that was all. But I was so convinced of the disadvantage of my living there under such circumstances, that I resolved if I could sell out I should go south. Where to go I did not know, but had the idea Kentucky might suit me well.

Last winter I read an article in a newspaper (Kentucky State Journal) about a Swiss Colony in Bernstadt, Laurel county, Kentucky, and also the address of Mr. J. C. Baumberger in Louisville. So, as soon as I got a chance to sell out, I made up my mind to go to that Colony, and struck out for it, not knowing much about it yet, but thought I would risk it. I took the night train from Toledo to Cincinnati, so I did not see much of Ohio any more, and did not care for it. In Cincinnati I took the Short-Line to Louisville, and then already I did see that I was coming into quite another country. Instead of the flat, level lands there were hills, the vegetation much more advanced, the air warmer;

and although I did not see that black ground of the bottom lands in Ohio, still I did see that they could raise something in Kentucky.

In Louisville already it looked to me like another world—Southern—and I began to like it. In Louisville I took the train to Livingston. The country grew more hilly, and seemed to me less peopled than Ohio. From Livingston I went afoot, the day afterwards, to Bernstadt; and although the way was long (for many years I had not walked such a long way), yet I felt to be wonderfully strengthened by that fresh mountain air; and when I drank of that sweet clear water that flows out of springs along the mountain sides, I felt that if I should live a year in such a country, I should feel myself to be another man again. Yes, when I came up from Livingston into the mountain country, it looked to me like Switzerland, only with the absence of the snow mountains, which is not to be regretted here. I arrived in the Colony in the evening tired out completely. If I had done such walking in Ohio, I would have been taken down with the fever and laid up for a few weeks. But now, curiously enough, after I had rested myself the day following, I was all right again. I did not bring much money along. I had \$150 to invest in a new home. I bought seven acres of land, and paid for it, had a little house built on it, and paid for it; so that for \$150 I got a paid-up home any how. I could not have done this in Ohio, and the ground I have is just as good, or rather better, than that which I had in Ohio at \$100 an acre; and the house, little as it is, would have cost me more around Toledo. Since my arrival in Bernstadt, middle of May, I have had sufficient time to make my observations about climate, water, and ground.

It is getting warm here sooner than in the North, of course, but the heat in summer is more continuous and uniform, and still not so oppressive as I experienced it in East Toledo, Ohio. The nights here are always cool and refreshing, and in the morning there is a heavy dew—a great difference to the summer heat around Toledo, and in those low level lands generally. There in summer, after the days have been warm, the nights are warm too, and sometimes so that folks cannot sleep at all, except towards morning, and then there is no dew, it having been too warm for it. I mention this because it is also a very important point. A laboring man in the warm season gets exhausted, not only from work, but also from the heat of the day. He should have a good sound sleep. But in such nights he cannot sleep at all. In the morning he has to go to work again, but feels weary already, and a succession of such days

and nights delivers him over to the fever, and so his work and earnings come to a stop in the midst of summer or the working season. That does not help to prosperity.

But here in Bernstadt one can sleep in a summer night, and how refreshing this acts! Since many years I have not slept so well in summer as here in Bernstadt; and also since many years I have not felt so little of weariness and tiredness as here in Bernstadt. If I was tired in the evening from working, in the morning I always felt ready to go at it again. This is a great advantage given by the climate here. The warm weather has continued here through the fall until November. We also had rain enough this summer, but not too much. At such times, when in the low or level lands they had heavy rains and inundations, we got simply a good rain here, and that was all. We have no inundations here, for the water can run off in every direction; and after a rain the land can soon be worked again—another great advantage.

In November the nights began to get cooler, and during the week, when there was a frost generally over the South, it froze at night here too; but in the forenoon already it was thawing; for when the sun is up here, it is soon warm enough to work with the coat off—another agreeable thing.

How the winter will be before it gets through, this, of course I do not know yet. But I do not expect to see, or rather feel, such a killing freezing as in the North; for in those flat, level countries North, when the west wind begins to blow, it freezes everything solid in a short time. I have seen the Maumee river frozen over within twenty-four hours so that teams and wagons could drive over it. Of such freezing and such a cold the new-comers from the old country, and especially those from Switzerland, have generally no idea before they are in it and caught by it; and then the suffering and hardship of a newly arrived family, lodged in a poorly constructed house, may be imagined even by those that have never been in such circumstances. For this reason alone I should advise all new-comers to seek homes in the Southern States, and Kentucky especially seems to me best suited to them.

But here in Bernstadt we have not only a long summer season, with a uniform and not oppressive warmth, and a mild and a short winter, but we have also excellent water for drinking and cooking and washing purposes. Almost anywhere around here, along the hill-sides, are found springs of a clear, sweet, delicious water that acts very favorably on

health and strength. Used as I was to that hard, earthy water in Ohio that had to be got from wells dug in the ground, fifteen or twenty or thirty feet deep, and then bricked up, so the whole will not cave in, and have the water filter in from the surrounding ground—used as I was to such water, I was agreeably surprised to find here a clear, sweet spring water for drinking. As I mentioned before, when I first came to taste it, coming up from Livingston, it seemed to me that with this water, and in this fresh mountain air, I could regain my health. I drank freely of that water all summer. For the first few weeks it purges, produces a kind of diarrhœa; but curiously enough, that diarrhœa did not weaken me. On the contrary, it sharpened the appetite and caused a disappearance of that gloominess that had settled within me from my long residence in a fever country. After some weeks the diarrhœa ceased, but the good effects are lasting. The same experience was shared by the other settlers here—in the first weeks the water purged them, then afterwards they feel well.

Upon this, my own experience, and that of others, I could recommend a stay here of from four to six months in the summer season, to such persons as are troubled with swelling and induration of the spleen (so-called fever or ague cake), swelling or induration of the liver, dyspepsia, obstruction of the bowels, and hypochondria and melancholy generally.

Instead of catching the rain-water from the roofs into barrels or into a cistern (as is the case in Ohio and other level countries, because the well-water cannot be used, being too hard and earthy), the water here from the springs can be used without any preparation, as it cooks well and washes well, and what a comfort that is, is best understood by the housewives or housekeepers.

Now, a few words about the ground, and then I hope to close this lengthy letter. As will be understood, by even those that have never been here, this country here is not a level country. It is hilly or mountainous, and therefore those that are used to plowing, harrowing, and cultivating level fields would not feel suited here. Again, here is not to be seen that rich bottom land, with one or two feet deep of black earth or humus. Nevertheless the ground is better than it looks. If there are here and there sandy patches, yet even on these sandy patches the trees are of considerable height, a thing that is not to be seen on barren sand. But mostly the ground consists of a mixture of clay and sand, with a humus strata of about four to five inches thickness; and

the trees growing on it, as white oak, black oak, chestnut, poplar, or whitewood, gum, etc., attain a considerable height, which shows that something can be raised on that ground. Of wild vegetation, I have seen the family of the *Leguminosæ* predominant, and therefore believe that in cultivation the plants of that family will do well, as beans, peas, vetches, esparcet, also clovers; these furnish already food for man and beast. Then potatoes and sweet potatoes, turnips, and rutabagas will grow nicely. Tobacco grows well; and if the advice from the Agricultural Department will be followed, to sow rye in the fall for the tobacco field, and then in the spring have it plowed under, I should think good paying crops of tobacco might be raised here. This summer I have also seen indications that grape-vines, blackberries, and raspberries would do well if cultivated. I have also seen corn (or maize) doing well enough here, but not so well as in the rich bottom land of lower-lying countries. I think that wheat might be raised here to better advantage than corn or maize.

For the benefit of those that, thinking of settling around here, have no clear idea of the condition of the country, I will say that they should not expect to get good cleared farms at the prices land brings here. The land is wooded—brush, trees, and fallen timber cover it. Any one taking up land here has to spend a year or more in clearing and fencing, and therefore it is desirable that settlers coming here should have yet sufficient money left to carry themselves through at least the first year, or they will find themselves disappointed and embarrassed. There are sometimes chances to buy an old farm with cleared land; but these lands need manuring, and, in my opinion, the most expedient thing here is green-manuring, which may be done with rye or buckwheat, or the Southern cow pea, or any quick-growing crop with heavy foliage. For this purpose, of course, plow and harrow and a good team are necessary, and the ground must be in condition so that these implements can be used, too. It would even be well, if new ground would be treated to green manuring; the returns would be much more satisfactory. It will be seen by this that the starting of a farm here requires not only much labor, but also a certain amount of capital; and that persons without any capital, that would have to depend on working out in order to make a living, will find it a hard task to get along, as there are no factories or manufacturing establishments here where they might find employment.

So far I have endeavored to express my views concerning the Colony Bernstadt; I aimed to state only what, according to my observation and judgment, will prove correct. One thing more I want to mention. It seems that Kentucky is much decried in other States as if the population was a lawless set, and adverse to immigration. From my own experience, I will say that I did not find here so much lawlessness as in Ohio, and that the Kentuckians are a friendly and accommodating people if the immigrant is not a rowdy himself.

As for myself, I am glad that I have come here; I feel greater satisfaction in building up a home here than in any place I have tried heretofore. I think the Colony Bernstadt will be a success in a few years, and that you, Mr. Proctor, and Mr. Brunner, deserve the thanks of all those that find a suitable and agreeable home in this mountain district of Kentucky.

Very respectfully,

Yours, truly,

C. WAegli.